

Soviet Bloc Economic Penetration of Africa

In 1957 the Soviet Bloc continued to increase its economic overtures to African countries. Bloc overtures have been made on the diplomatic, economic and cultural levels. The Bloc has concentrated its economic activities in the newly independent nations such as Tunisia, Morocco, Ghana, Liberia and Libya.

The most extensive Bloc economic advances in Africa have been made in the field of trade. Although trade with the Bloc has been sporadic and of minor importance, it is increasing and new trade agreements call for expanded trade. Bloc offers to lift burdensome surpluses such as cocoa in Ghana and cotton in Sudan have received favorable publicity. Trade agreements have been concluded by a number of Bloc countries with Morocco and Tunisia and both Ghana and Sudan have received offers by the USSR to expand commercial relations. Several of the Bloc countries have presented impressive exhibits at trade fairs held in Morocco and Tunisia.

There have been few Bloc offers of credits to African countries. The Sudan and Tunisia have received general offers of economic assistance from the Bloc but to date these have not been accepted. The Bloc has extended a number of scholarship offers to students in African countries but acceptance has been on a limited basis. Czechoslovak and Soviet offers of arms to Tunisia during the Tunisian arms crisis were made public by various Tunisian officials but were later disclaimed. Nevertheless, the threat of Bloc arms aid was a factor in the crisis.